
Mr. *Pike's*

S E R M O N

ON

The Duty of GOSPEL-MINISTERS, as
CHRIST'S *Embassadors.*

Mr. Pyles

SEERMON



The Duty of Gospel Ministers, by
Charles F. Johnson

Gospel-Ministers, CHRIST's Embassadors.

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S E R M O N

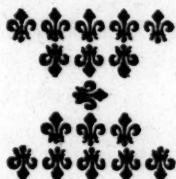
Preach'd before a

Convention of *Ministers,*

At *Newington*, in the Province of *New-Hampshire*, October 9. 1750.

By *James Pike*, M. A.

Pastor of the Church at *Summersworth*.



Luke x. 16. *He that beareth you, beareth me : and he that despiseth you, despiseth me : and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*

B O S T O N :

Printed by D. FOWLE in *Queen-Street* next to the Prison. 1751.

Captain-Minister, Christ's Embellisher.

A

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B O O K S

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THE
CHARACTER
OF
Gospel-Ministers,
AS

Embassadors for CHRIST,

Consider'd and apply'd.



2 COR. V. 20.

*Now then we are Embassadors for Christ,
as though God did beseech you by us ;
we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye re-
conciled to God.*

MAN at first came out of God's Hand in-
tirely Pure and Holy, and was at perfect
Peace and Friendship with his Maker ; they
amicably met, and sweetly communed to-
gether, with a mutual Affection and Complacency : *Man*
loved *God*, and *God* loved *Man* ; till *Man* broke out
into open and dreadful Rebellion, and so justly forfeited
the Favour and Friendship of his great Creator. Then
Man

Man became an Enemy to God, and made God an Adversary to him ; and so Heaven and Earth by Reason of Sin are now at Variance : the Hatred is mutual ; God is Man's righteous Adversary, and Man is God's unrighteous Enemy. This is the sad and miserable Condition of all Mankind since the Fall : Man's Nature, which was once pure and innocent, is by Reason of the Poison of Sin corrupted, and turned into Enmity itself, against God : " The *carnal Mind* is *Enmity* against God ;" † though alas ! few, very few, are sensible of it.

But, blessed be God, notwithstanding the *great and woful Breach*, which Sin has made betwixt him and us, he is become *reconcilable* to Sinners in and through the Lord *Jesus Christ* ; and upon the Sinner's hearty Compliance with the Gospel-Method of Salvation by *Jesus Christ*, he becomes actually *reconciled*, though not before. Now the great and important Work assigned to Gospel-Ministers, who in my Text are stiled *Embassadors for Christ*, is conversant about this momentous Affair of bringing God and Sinners together again. *We pray you in Christ's Stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

* In the Text and Context we have many very weighty and important Points of Truth plainly intimated, expressed, or implied ; such as these which follow.—

That *Man*, while in a State of Nature, or before Regeneration, is at *perfect Enmity* against God ; as the Apostle tells us, " The *carnal Mind* is *Enmity* against God : " he doth not say meerly, it is an *Enemy* ; but in the Abstract, it is *Enmity*. This *Enmity* is presupposed, when the Apostle in the Text beseeches Men to be *reconciled to God* : for what need of *Reconciliation*, where there is no *Variance or Enmity* ? Christ's *treating* with Sinners by his *Embassadors*, necessarily implies their Fall from that State of Favour and Friendship in which they were created, and that they are now Enemies and Rebels against God. " If no War with Heaven, what need of *Embassadors of Peace* ? The very Office of the Ministry is

an Argument of the Fall. Gospel-Ordinances and Officers came in upon the Fall, and expire with the Mediator's dispensatory Kingdom." †

Again we are instructed, That the great *End* and *scope* of the *Gospel* is, that Sinners may be brought into State of *Peace* and *Reconciliation* with God. The Gospel is called "the Word of Reconciliation," in the Verse preceeding our Text; and just before, the Ministry of the Gospel, which was committed to the Apostles, is called "the Ministry of Reconciliation;" because by the Gospel we are taught the Necessity of being reconciled, and how we may come to be at Peace and in a State of Reconciliation with God. On Account of this Word of Reconciliation committed to them, the Apostles are called in our Text *Embassadors for Christ*, and their main business is to persuade Sinners to be reconciled to God. O, what a Blessing is the Gospel! yet, alas, how little priz'd and set by!

Again, We are here taught, that none ought to assume the Office of preaching this Word *with Authority*, except they are *called and sent of God*. This is plain from Verse 8th. "He hath *committed to us* the Word of Reconciliation." None ought to preach this Word with Authority, but such to whom the Lord *commits* it. How greatly men doth it concern those who take upon them the Office of preaching the Gospel, to be well satisfied in their own Minds, that they are *called and sent of God*, lest they go on before they are sent!

Again, We are instructed here, of what Importance it is, that *Ministers behave as becomes the Embassadors of Christ*; that they closely pursue the *Commission* given them by Christ. They must be careful to keep close to this, lest they give Offence to their great Lord and Master, and smart for it too.

Again, it is suggested here, That Christ's Embassadors should with all *Earnestness of Affection* deal with their people, and endeavour by the Blessing of Heaven, that they

they may be Instrumental in bringing them to a Sight and Sense of their Sins, and of that dreadful *Enmity* which is in their Hearts against the Being, Perfections and Will of God. *This* I apprehend to be of great Importance that Ministers labour much, in the Course of their Preaching, to convince their People of the sad State they are in by Nature ; to shew them, if possible, the *Enmity* of their Hearts against God : for, till they are brought in some Measure to a Sight and Sense of this, I see no Hope of their being prevailed with to seek, in good Earnest, after Peace and Reconciliation with God, in and through Jesus Christ. Who will seek, in good Earnest, after that which he sees *no Need* of ?

In a Word, it is suggested here, That People ought to consider, and realize it, that when Christ's *Embassadors* are pleading with them to be reconciled to God, they have to do with GOD, and have CHRIST intreating them to be reconciled. " Now then we are *Embassadors* for Christ, as though GOD did beseech you by us : we pray you in CHRIST's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

But in farther discoursing from these Words, by divine Assistance, I shall endeavour to shew,

1. What this *Character* of Gospel-Ministers, *Embassadors for Christ*, imports, and supposes, or implies.

2. What that great *Work* is, which is here particularly assigned to Christ's *Embassadors*, viz. to endeavour to *Reconciliation* of Sinners to God.

3. That it is the important Duty of Christ's *Embassadors*, with all Diligence, Earnestness, and Importunity, to *urge, persuade, beseech* and *intreat* Sinners to be reconciled to God, by a cordial Submission to the Gospel-Terms of Peace and Reconciliation.—And then,

Lastly, I shall make *Application* of the Subject, in several Uses, respecting both Ministers and People.

I. I am to shew what this *Character* of Gospel-Ministers, "*Embassadors for Christ*," imports, and supposes, or implies. — Now,

1. I think, it is plainly supposed in this Character of Gospel-Ministers, that *they themselves* be reconciled to God. — Is it rational to suppose, that a Prince will send an *Enemy*, one whose Heart is full of Enmity against him, as an *Embassador*, to negotiate for him in an Affair relating to Peace and Reconciliation between him and some other Prince, or Court, with whom he is at Variance? Or, if such an one should be sent, is it likely he will do his Prince or Country much real Service? And will not every one grant, it is best, that those who bring the Word of Reconciliation from God to a People, be *themselves* (personally) reconciled to God? One who was never enlightened by the Spirit of God, can't be thought to know the Mind and Will of God, *so well* (at least) as one that is. *The natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness to him* (whether he be a Minister, or any other Person) *neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* * Therefore it is not reasonable, to suppose, that he is so fit an *Interpreter* of God (as a Minister is called, *Job* 33. 23, 24.) as one that has been *taught of God*. A Minister of the Gospel ought to be well stock'd with *human Learning*; but this, of itself, I apprehend, is by no means sufficient *thoroughly to furnish* him for the Work of the Ministry. 'Tis requisite, that there be *divine and spiritual Knowledge*, as well as human Learning. "A true Minister must be inwardly taught by the spiritual School-master, the Holy Ghost. This Teaching makes a Man a true *Interpreter* to his People; and without this he cannot be: for how can a Man be a true Interpreter of God to his People, unless he knows the Mind of God himself? And how can he know the Mind of God, but by the Teaching of the Spirit of
B " God?"

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

“ God? See 1 Cor. 2. 9, 10, 11, 12, 14. God *may* make
 “ use of the Ministry of unconverted Men for the Con-
 “ version of Sinners, and no doubt sometimes *doth*; to
 “ shew that the Efficacy is not in the Person of Man
 “ but in the Ordinance of God.” † But then is it not
best, that the Minister have the Knowledge of divine
 Things, not only floating in his Brain, but engraven in
 his Heart, and printed in his Soul by the spiritual Fingers
 of God? And therefore, after all his Study, Meditation
 &c. he should pray earnestly with *David*, *Open thou*
mine Eyes, that I may see the Wonders of thy Law. † “ A
 “ Minister is to declare the Reconciliation betwixt God
 “ and Man; and is he himself not reconciled? Dare he
 “ present *another* Man to God’s Mercy for Pardon, and
 “ never yet presented *himself*? Can he commend the State
 “ of Grace to *another*, and never felt the Sweetness thereof
 “ in his own Soul? *

2. In the Character here given of Gospel-Ministers is
 implied *Christ’s Interest* in and *Title* to them. They are
Embassadors for Christ,—Christ’s Embassadors. “ Christ
 “ hath a peculiar Right to the *Church*, besides what he
 “ hath to the *World*: yet hath a more peculiar Right to
 “ his *Ministers*, as having their Commission from him
 “ and Dependance on him, in a more special Manner
 “ *Psal.* 68. 18. *Eph.* 4. 8.” || The Ministers of the
 Gospel are *Christ’s*, to serve him as their *Master* and *Lord*
 to promote and advance the Interest of his Kingdom in
 the Hearts of his People. Hence, in many Places of Scrip-
 ture, ||| they are called the *Ministers of Christ*, the *Ser-*
vants of Christ.

3. In the Character here given of Gospel-Ministers is
 implied *Christ’s Sovereignty over them*. “ So that he may
 “ dispose of them at his Pleasure, for furthering of the
 “ in his Work, if they be faithful; and for blasting
 “ the

† Perkins. † *Psal.* cxix. 18. * Perkins. || *Durham.* ||| 1 Cor.
 3. 5. 2 Cor. 11. 23. *Eph.* 6. 6. *Phil.* 1. 1.

them, if they be otherwise. And therefore *Christ's Embassadors* should always remember, that though they be in an eminent Place, yet are they subject to Christ, who is their Sovereign; and so ought to be dependant on him: otherwise they are liable to his Trial and Censure, who can dispose of them as he will. †

4. In the Character here given of Gospel-Ministers is implied or imported *their Authority*. They are *Embassadors for Christ*: they come and speak *in his Name*, and by Virtue of *Power* and *Authority* derived from him. Christ says to his Ministers, "Go ye, and teach all Nations."—"Go thou, and preach the Kingdom of God."—"These Things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with *all Authority*." * "A Minister should hold forth the *Authority* of the Ordinance, and Word, and of him in whose *Name* he speaks. Whatever he be in himself, and whatever his Thoughts be of himself, and of his Gifts; yet being called to carry the *Lord's Message*, he ought so to behave in this Business as not to lessen the *Master's Authority*, by his fainting, and discouraging Apprehensions of his own Inability and Unworthiness, nor by his heartless and languid Way of speaking:" ‖ but ought to deliver the solemn Message with which he is sent, in such a Manner as becomes *the Oracles of God*. And that he may not destroy or lessen his Authority, he should be always careful *so to walk* as becomes an *Embassador of Christ*.—And this Consideration should also have great Weight with our *People*, that the Message we bring them, we bring by virtue of *Power* and *Authority* received from our Lord.

5. This Character of Christ's Ministers supposes *Fitness*. When earthly Princes send Embassadors, they choose Men *qualified* for the Business, Men of Fidelity, Wisdom, and Prudence: much more ought *Christ's Embassadors*

to

† *Durham*. * *Matth. xxviii. ult. Luke ix. 60. Tit. ii. 15.*

‖ *Id.*

to be endowed with these excellent Properties and Qualifications.

They should be *faithful Men*. "It is required in Stewards, that a Man be found *faithful*;" * *faithful* to their *Lord and Master*, and *faithful* to the Souls committed to their Care. "What Room or Ground is there for *Trust*, where there is no *Truth*? Hence is that solemn Charge, 2 *Tim.* 2. 2. to commit that great Trust to *faithful Men*." Ministers must declare the whole Counsel of God to their People, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: the whole Message, with which their Lord and Master sends them, must be delivered; otherwise they prove themselves *unfaithful* *Embassadors*.

Again, They should be Men of *Wisdom* and *Prudence*: otherwise it's not likely they'll do much good Service in the Church of Christ. "Fidelity and Honesty make a good Christian; but the Addition of Prudence makes a good Ambassador. Faithfulness will fix the Eye upon the right End; but it's Prudence must direct to the proper Means of attaining it.—A prudent Minister will study the *Souls* of his People, more than the *best human Books* in his Library; and will not choose what is easiest for him, but what is most necessary for them." †

Prudence is requisite in order to the Choice of suitable *Subjects* from Time to Time, on which to preach.—Prudence is requisite to *methodize* our Discourses well. And Prudence is necessary also in order to the using proper *Language*. There is a Diction or Style, that is most suitable for the Preacher of the Gospel. Ministers, when in the Pulpit, should use such Language, as that the weakest Capacity in their Congregations may understand them. "Now a *crucified Style* best suits the Preachers of a *crucified Christ*: a grave and proper Style becomes the Lips of Christ's Embassadors. *Tertullian* checks those Preachers, whose Sermons dress up Christianity

* 1 *Cor.* iv. 2. † *Flavel*.

in *philosophical*, rather than *evangelical* Terms. Prudence will choose Words that are *solid*, rather than *florid*. Prudence will cast away a *thousand* fine Words, for *one* that is apt to penetrate the Conscience." *

6. Faithful Embassadors will have it much upon their Minds, that they *succeed* in the Embassy upon which their Princes send them: so should it lie with great Weight upon the Minds of *Christ's* Embassadors, that the Message, with which he sends them, be cordially received by those to whom they are sent. — What Prince would send such an *Embassador*, as he knew would be unconcerned and indifferent, whether his Message were kindly received, or not? And one that is faithful, will have the interest of his Master much at Heart: so a faithful Embassador of the Lord Jesus Christ will be zealous to get his Message received by those to whom he is sent, and will be concerned to *save those that hear him*. This is what will lie near his Heart, yea, with Weight upon it: and therefore, with great Zeal and Diligence, he will invite, exhort, and perswade his Hearers to receive the Message with which his Lord and Master sends him. — *We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* — This Zeal, and this Concern about the Success of the Gospel-Message, is a most *necessary* Qualification in a true Gospel-Minister; even to be travelling in-Birth till Christ be formed in the Hearts of his Hearers; "I travel in Birth," says the Apostle, *till Christ be formed in you.*" † He must not be satisfied and contented with the *meer* Delivery of his Message, or with the doing of it *neatly* and *handsomely*; but must so preach to his Hearers, as hungering and thirsting for the Salvation of their precious and immortal Souls; as having "a single, serious, vehement Desire, that they may be gathered and espoused to Christ; that the Proud may be humbled, the Hypocrite convinced, and the Word made the *Savour of Life unto Life* unto them, according to their Case."

* *Id.* † *Gal.* iv. 19.

“ Case. — This is a *Fountain-Qualification*, from whence
 “ many other Qualifications do flow ; it being seldom
 “ in any Minister, but it putteth an *Edge* and *Weight*
 “ upon the Word in his Mouth ; as the *Want* of it makes
 “ the most part want Savour, and the finest Words often
 “ to have but little Weight.” † If we, who are Christ’s
 Embassadors, have this Qualification, shall we not be
 able to say, “ Not our Interest, but Christ’s ; not our
 Glory, but his ; ” — Not worldly Riches, Honours, the
 Applause of Men, &c. are our Desire ; but that Christ
 may be formed in the Hearts of our People, that they
 may be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus.

But it’s Time I pass,

II. To consider the great *Work* here particularly assigned
 to Christ’s Embassadors, viz. to endeavour the *Recon-*
ciliation of Sinners to God.

The Work of Ministers is a great Work indeed :
 we know of none greater upon Earth. Their Employment
 most certainly, is very solemn and weighty. O that the
 Lord would be pleased to give us, who are in the Num-
 ber of his Embassadors, a just Sense thereof, and make
 both very zealous, and abundantly successful ! — Our Bu-
 siness, as we are *Embassadors for Christ*, is to endeavour
 that God and Man may come together. Agreeable to what
 was before noted, Man (*sinful Man*) is departed from
 God ! Sin has separated between God and Man, and placed
 them at an awful Distance, the one from the other. *Isai,*
59. 2. But your Iniquities have separated between you
and your God. Sin has justly provoked God to become
 Man’s Adversary, and has made Man an Enemy to God.
 yea, it hath filled Man’s Heart with *Enmity* against his
 Maker. *The carnal Mind is Enmity against God ; it is*
not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. O
 the sad State of Man by Nature ! No Man before Rege-
 neration can truly conform to the Law of God. “ There
 “ a natural *Contrariety*, direct *Opposition* and *Enmity*”

the Will of every unregenerate Person to *God himself*, and to *his holy Will*. The *Will* was once God's *Deputy* in the Soul, set to command there for him ; but now it has set up against him." Observe how the Apostle describes the miserable State of the *Colossians* before their conversion. *Col. 1. 21. You that were sometimes alienated, and Enemies in your Mind by wicked Works, yet now ye are reconciled, &c.* In the Verse immediately preceeding, the Apostle treated of the *Method* and *Design* of reconciliation in general ; in this Verse he makes particular Application to the *Colossians* : he describes to them the sad and miserable State they were in before their regeneration and Conversion ; they were *Strangers*, yea, *Enemies* unto God, *Enemies in their Minds* ; " which implies a deep-rooted *Enmity*, advancing so high as to hate God, not as a Creator, but as a Lawgiver ; not as a Benefactor, but as a Judge, and Revenger of Sin. Oh, deplorable Degradation ! to be at Enmity in our Minds against him who is the Author of our Being, and the Fountain of our Happiness !" + — Every natural Man is an Enemy to the Nature of God. *They are Enemies unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways.* + Man in his natural State of Sin, is an Enemy to God, as revealed in his Word. An infinitely holy, just, powerful, true and faithful Being, is not the God whom he loves ; but the God whom he hates. This is the sad and miserable State of all Mankind by Nature : and hence it is that there is a Necessity of Reconciliation.

Now the great *Work* here particularly assigned to Gospel-Ministers, as *Christ's Embassadors*, is to endeavour, in the use of such Means as God hath appointed, that Sinners may be *reconciled* to God. *We pray you*, says our Apostle, that eminent Minister of the Lord Jesus Christ ; *we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* — This is a great and difficult Work. Nor are *Embassadors* sent to be sent but about some very arduous and important

important Affairs. And what renders the Work of Christ's Embassadors extremely difficult, is that Backwardness, that Aversion which there is in Man's Nature, to submit to the Gospel-Terms of Peace and Reconciliation.—Surely 'tis a great Work, to bring Heaven and Earth, or God and Sinners together ! The Employment is very solemn and weighty. O that all Christ's Embassadors had just and suitable Sense hereof, deeply impressed upon the Hearts ! Well might the Apostle cry out, *Who is sufficient for these Things !* † Surely Ministers, if serious and in earnest, having their Hearts in their Work, and engaged in pleading with their People to be *reconciled to God* will find it a Work that demands the Exertment of the best Powers, and sufficient to take up their whole Time. For my Part, I see no Room for Ministers to be Idle, no, nor to cumber themselves about worldly Business, there is a Necessity lying upon them, arising from the Character as Embassadors of Christ, and the Business which they are sent upon, to comply with that Charge, *Meditate upon these Things ; give thyself wholly to them*. Oh, what a great, what a difficult Work have Ministers lying upon their Hands ! O that God would make us truly and thoroughly sensible hereof, and faithful in doing it ! Let us *take Heed to the Ministry which we have received of the Lord, that we fulfil it.* * — But I must enlarge here. I pass,

III. To shew that it is the important Duty of Christ's Embassadors, with all *Diligence, Earnestness, and Importunity*, to *urge, persuade, beseech and intreat* Sinners to *reconciled to God*. — Verily, if there be any Work upon Earth, that requires Diligence, Application, Seriousness, and Earnestness in the doing of it, I am sure, the Work of the Ministry is that Work. — Here consider,

1. The *Command* of their Lord, who sends them, to lay them under the strongest and most indispensable Obligation

† 2 Cor. ii. 16. || 1 Tim. iv. 15. * Col. iv. 17.

ions thus to discharge their Duty. — The Authority of God is more binding, than the highest in Princes, or the dearest in Parents. As the immediate Servants of the King are under special Obligations to obey his Commands, besides the common Duty of other Subjects ; so the Ministers of the Gospel, by their Consecration, and immediate Relation to God, are bound with all serious Diligence to do his Will." Now this the Will of God, that they " teach Men to observe all things, whatsoever he hath commanded them" : that they "*Preach the Gospel,*" even the *Gospel of Peace, the Word of Reconciliation.* * See what a solemn Adjuration and Charge is given to Ministers, in 1 *Tim.* 4. begin. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the Quick and the Dead at his Appearing and Kingdom, *Preach the Word* (the Word of Christ, the Word of Salvation ;) be *instant, in Season, out of Season*; reprove, rebuke, exhort with *all Long suffering and Doctrines.*" Hence it is plain, that the Embassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ should be instant, active, urgent, and zealous in the Execution of their Office. " It must be a powerful *Opiate* indeed, that can so benumb and stupify the Conscience of a *Minister*, as that he shall not feel the awful Authority of such a Charge." ¶ The solemn Work, Ministers have in Charge from their Lord and Master, is, that they endeavour the *Reconciliation* of Sinners to God : and can they be too diligently, too seriously and affectionately employed in so great a Work!

2. The great *natural Backwardness* and *Aversion* there in Sinners to submit to the Gospel-Terms of Peace and Reconciliation, make it necessary, that Christ's Embassadors should be diligent, importunate, and in good earnest, urging, perswading, and beseeching them to be reconciled to God. — Nothing is more contrary to corrupt Nature,

C

Nature,

Matth. xxviii. ult. Mark xvi. 15. Rom. x. 15. 2 Cor. 5. 18.
Burket.

Nature, than to submit to the true Gospel-Terms of Peace and Reconciliation : great Self-denial must be exercised in order to this. The Terms, upon which Peace and Reconciliation are offered, no ways suit with the corrupt Nature of Man. Man, while in his unregenerate State has not any Will, Disposition, or Inclination to submit to the Gospel-Method or Device of Peace and Reconciliation with God. And hence it is, that Ministers need to be very urgent and importunate with their People, *they are not willing, till made so* by the Almighty Power of God ; but, in the *Day of his Power*, they shall be made willing. *Psal. 110. 3.* “Thy People shall be willing in the Day of thy Power.” And the greater the Backwardness of Sinners is to submit to the Gospel-Terms of Reconciliation, the greater Pains must Ministers take in *beseeking them to be reconciled to God*, and in using the appointed Means in Order thereto.

3. The great Danger Sinners are in of *perishing* eternally, 'till *reconciled* to God in Christ Jesus, should put Christ's Embassadors upon the greatest Diligence and Earnestness in perswading them to a speedy and hearty Compliance with the Terms of Reconciliation. — When Ministers have a just Sense of the dreadful Danger immortal Souls are continually in of sinking into *Hell*, that Place of Misery, where there is nothing but ‘weeping wailing, and gnashing of Teeth,’ where they have ‘no Rest Day nor Night, and the Smoak of their Torment ascendeth up forever and ever ;’ how can they but be earnest and very importunate in pleading with them, till they are prevail'd upon to submit ? — Now this is the dangerous Case of all our Hearers, while out of Christ while in an unregenerate State, while unreconciled to God : ‘there is *no Peace*, saith my God, to the *Wicked*.’ They are every Moment in Danger of losing Christ forever, of losing Heaven, of losing their own Souls, and of being cast into that Lake of Fire and Brimstone which

for ever and ever. In this their unhappy Case, are *we*, the *Embassadors of Christ*, sent to warn, beseech, and exhort them, and labour by all Means, that we may be instrumental in helping Sinners out of their dangerous Condition; Are we *sent*, I say, upon such important Business! Surely then we ought to apply ourselves to this, with the greatest Diligence, Earnestness, and Faithfulness.

And I am verily perswaded, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, that when we have on our own Minds a just Sense of the Worth of immortal Souls, and of the dangerous Condition they are in while unreconciled to God, we can't but feel and shew a deep Concern for them, that they may become reconciled to God, that they may be saved. If there be any of our Hearers, who will not have any Pity upon their own Souls, how can *we* help shewing our Compassion and Solitude for them?

4. The Consideration of that *sad and awful Account*, which *Ministers* will have to give up to their Lord and Master, if they are found slothful, negligent, and unfaithful Servants, is of great Weight to induce them to be very diligent and earnest in the Discharge of their Trust. That we must give an *Account* of our Embassy, is plain from the Word of God. 'We shall *all* stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ;' Ministers as well as their People. 'So then *every one* of us shall give Account of himself to God.' Ministers are to 'watch for Souls, *as they that must give Account.*' † We must give an Account of our own Souls, whether we ourselves (in our private Capacity) have indeed submitted to the Terms of Reconciliation: but this is not all; we must also give an Account how we have managed in our ministerial Office and publick Trust, as *Embassadors for Christ*.

Now this giving up our Account, is in order that we may be judged, and receive according as we have behav'd in the Work of the Ministry. If we are found *faithful* to Christ our Lord and Master, and to the Souls of

† Rom. xiv. 10, 12. Heb. 13. 17.

of our People, we shall *deliver our own Souls*, and receive the Rewards of good and faithful Servants : * but if found of a contrary *Character*, and precious immortal Souls have perish'd through our Sloth and Unfaithfulness, *their Blood will be required at our Hands*.

This we are told in plain and awful Terms, *Ezek. 3. 17, 18, 19*, ' Son of Man, I have made thee a Watch-man unto the House of Israel : therefore hear the Word at my Mouth, and give them Warning from me. ' When I say unto the Wicked, Thou shalt surely die, ' and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way, to save his Life ; ' the same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity, but his *Blood will I require at thine Hand* : Yet if thou warn the Wicked, and he turn not from his Wickedness, nor from his wicked Way, he shall die in his Iniquity ; but *thou hast delivered thy Soul*.

Now, is not the Consideration of that *great and terrible Day of the Lord*, when we must give up our Account, not only as Christian Professors, but as *Embassadors for Christ*, a powerful Motive to excite us unto a diligent, serious, and faithful Discharge of our Duty ? — When our Apostle had mentioned this awful Appearance before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, in 2 Cor. 5. 10. he immediately infers, in the next Verse, *Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we perswade Men*. —

Hence how *evident* and how *important* is the Duty of Christ's Embassadors ? Surely it greatly concerns us, with all Diligence, Seriousness and Importunity, to *perswade Men*, even as though God did beseech them by us, and to *pray them in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God*. We ought so to behave in this *great and momentous Business*, as that we may *compel them to come in* ; or if we fail of Success, yet however that we may safely take them to Record, as Paul did his Hearers, *that we are pure from the Blood of all Men*. †

* Matt. xxv. 21. † Acts xxviii. 26.

But it's Time I come to the *Improvement*, which may be in several Uses, respecting both Ministers and People.

Use 1. Hence we learn the *Wisdom and Condescension* of God, in carrying on his Treaty with sinful Men by such *Embassadors*, who are *Men of like Passions with them*. Had the Lord *personally* and *immediately* treated with Sinners, his awful Majesty would have overwhelmed them. The Creature is too weak to bear the Appearance of the great God. What did *Israel* say, when they had heard the Voice of God from Mount *Sinai*? 'Let me not hear again the Voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great Fire any more, that I die not.' Yea, 'so terrible was the Sight,' that *Moses* himself said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.' * — Or had the Lord appointed *Angels*, as *Embassadors* to carry on this Treaty of Peace and Reconciliation between him and us, *their* Appearances would have tended more to terrify, than *perswade* us. — But the *Embassadors* whom God has employed, being of the same Nature, of the same Mould and Temper with ourselves, can say to you, as *Elibu* did to *Job*, 'Behold, I am according to thy Wish, in God's Stead; I also am formed out of the Clay; behold, my Terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my Hand be heavy upon thee.' †

Use 2. Hence how *dangerous* must it needs be, for any to enter into the Office of the *Ministry*, except they be called and sent of God? — "This is more than *Christ* himself would do." — Every one that is about to enter on the Work of the *Ministry*, should be well satisfied in his own Mind, that he is called of God to this great and solemn Work; lest he be found to have run before he was sent of God. And I may add, so ought Ministers to be well satisfied in their own Minds, concerning those whom they ordain to the *Ministry*, that they are truly called of God. Therefore Candidates should

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be sufficiently tried, before they are admitted into the Ministry. The Apostle's Direction is, '*Lay Hands judiciously on no Man.*' ||

Use 3. Hence how *sinful* and *foolish* is it in any to *despise* and *reject* such as are true and faithful *Embassadors for Christ*? This must needs be an Offence to Christ, the Master and Lord. Hereby Christ himself is contemned as also his Authority, and his good Will to Sinners. Christ came in the Name of his *Father*; so, by the same Authority, he hath sent forth Ministers in *his Name*. Thus Christ expresses himself in his Prayer to the Father *Job. 17. 18.* "*As thou hast sent me into the World, even so have I sent them into the World.*" — And thus he declar'd to his Apostles, † "*As my Father hath sent me, so have I sent you.*" — Some may think it a *small* *no Crime*, to contemn and reject an Embassador of the Lord Jesus Christ; but in thinking so, they are miserably deceiv'd: for hereby they despise and reject *Christ himself*, from whom they have received Commission, and consequently the *Father* also who sent him. So that (as *Flavel* speaks) "*It is a Rebellion that runs high, even to the Fountain-Head of the most supreme Authority.*" He therefore who sets himself against a true and faithful Minister of Christ in the proper Execution of his Office, sets himself against God the Father and God the Son. Hear what Christ says to his Disciples; "*He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*" Agreeable to which is that of the Apostle, "*He that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God.*" *

But then, "this Reverence and Submission, that is expected from you to Christ's Embassadors, is not to them *as Men*, but as *Men in Office*, as Christ's *Embassadors.*" You owe them Reverence and Submission not as commanding and forbidding *in their own Name*, but as speaking in the Name of *Christ*: and when

peak in his Name or by his Authority, he expects, even from the greatest on Earth, Submission to them, how mean or despicable soever their Persons are. And therefore it was that "God so severely punished *Zedekiah*, because he *humbled not himself* before *Jeremiah*, speaking from the Mouth of the Lord. 2 *Chron.* 36. 12." * or any to resist Christ's Embassadors, when addressing them in his Name, speaking his Word, and delivering his Message, is "high Rebellion, and an high Affront to the Sovereign Authority of Heaven. But then Ministers should be very careful to maintain that Veneration and Respect, due to them, in the Consciences of their Hearers, by keeping close to their Commission," by *behaving themselves as they ought in the House of God*, and deporting at all Times, out of the Pulpit, as well as in it, as becomes the Character of *Embassadors for Christ*; *shewing Uncorruptness* both in Doctrine and Life. They should in all Company and Society, remember what Character they sustain, and whose Embassadors they are.

Use 4. Hence how reasonable is it, that People communicate willingly and freely for the *Support and Comfort* of those whom Christ sends to them with the Word of Reconciliation? — That it is the Duty of a People so to do, is most plainly revealed in the Word of God. The Apostle *Paul*, in the 9th Chap. of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, after having proved the *Reasonableness* of the Thing, declares that it is also the Appointment of God, *That they who Preach the Gospel should Live of the Gospel*. If indeed we made a *temporal Living*, the great End of our preaching the Word, we should be vile Men indeed: but if this be our great End, that God may be glorified, in your Reconciliation to him through Christ Jesus; and if to this Purpose we are daily watching and depending ourselves, you ought not to think much of communicating a Portion of your temporal Substance for our Necessity and Comfort. *If we have sown unto you spiritual*

ritual Things, (says the Apostle) *is it a great Thing if we shall reap your carnal Things!*—I might mention many Texts to this Purpose; but at present shall only refer you to that in *Gal. 6. 6. &c.* “Let him that is taught in the Word, *communicate* to him that *teacheth*, in all good Things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked for whatsoever a Man *soweth*, that shall he also *reap*,” &c.

Use 5. How *cautious* should Christ's Embassadors be that they don't *prostitute their Authority*, to urge or abet Commands which are *contrary* to the Commands of the Lord and Master, and so reflect Dishonour upon him thereby. — Ministers, as well as others, through the *Fear of Man*, are in Danger of doing that which they ought not to do, and of leaving that undone which they ought to do. But when the Case is so, that either God or Man must be offended, let *Man* be offended. In such a Case let us not fear Man, who only can hurt the Body; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell. Let us fear *Him*, from whom there lies no Appeal, against whom there is no Cavilling or Disputing; from whom nothing can be conceal'd, whose Wrath none can resist. If any of our People would by Flatteries or Frowns draw us off from our Zeal, Faithfulness and Closeness in Preaching, either to justify them or to connive at them, that they may be suffered to go on peaceably and quietly in any evil or false Way, in any sinful Practice whatever; let us think well upon our awful Charge, and remember Who hath sent us, and for whom we are acting; and let not the Fear of Men, the Fear of losing their Love or Esteem, of losing our Credit, or our Ease and Peace, or even Life itself, turn us out of the Path of Duty, or make us depart from our sacred Instructions. When we are tempted thus to do so, let us, among other Things, remember those two Examples, that of the *old Prophet* recorded in *1 Kings 18* And that of *Aaron*, in making the Golden Calf to gratify the Idolatrous Inclination of the People, recorded *Exod. 32.*

Since those who are put into the Ministry, are *God's Messengers*, then let them not be *Men-pleasers*. Being the *Lord's Servants*, let them not be *Servants of Men*, to fear their Terror, or to flatter their Lusts and gratify their vicious Humours. — To turn aside from following our Commission, though it be but a little, to please *Men*, will be very displeasing to *Christ*, our Lord and Master : and those who will venture to yield their Authority, to step aside from their Duty and Trust, and to disregard their Master's Orders, for the sake of pleasing the sinful Humours of Men (yea, though they be the greatest Men upon Earth) may look for Anger from their great Lord, who is above all. Nay, even good Men, wherein they may be led by a culpable Humour, are to be *withstood*, and not flatter'd in it. *Paul* has left us an Example for our Imitation. See *Gal.* 2. 11—14. with *1 Thess.* 2—6.

Yea, we must not seek to *please ourselves*, or to bring our own Purposes to pass ; “ but in every Motion, either made to us, or suggested from our own Hearts, we must forthwith call to Mind, *who* sent us hither, and from whom are we come.” We are come from and for the Lord, and therefore we must not yield to any Thing, nor aim at any Thing, but what is conformable to the Will and tends to the Glory of him who hath sent us.

Use 6. Are we, who are put into the Ministerial Office, *Embassadors for Christ* ? then let us be careful that we don't deliver *our own Fancies* and *Inventions* ; but *his* Message, who hath sent us, and as we have received it. The Message we deliver to our People be the *Lord's* Message, if the Word we speak to them be the *Lord's* Word, then may we boldly come to them with a *Thus saith the Lord*. We may speak *freely*, when we speak the *Word of the Lord* ; “ We have a Master, who will make us good : We may stand boldly in the Face of our Enemies ; we have a Master, who will defend us.”

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And every faithful Minister may say, "*In the Strength of my Lord, I will deliver the Message which he has sent by me; he whom I serve, and whose I am, he who sent me, and for whom I come, will bear me out.*"

Use 7. Are the Ministers of the Gospel *Embassadors for Christ*? then they should make *his Glory* the great *End* of their Preaching and Living. — We should take Heed, lest we be found *Preaching ourselves*, and not *Christ Jesus the Lord*. O let us be ashamed of any Thing, in our Doctrine or Manner of Life, which may reflect Dishonour either on Christ's Name, his Gospel, or our Office. Let us not make either our Subsistence, or Comfort, or Name and Reputation, our governing View; but let our *Master's Glory* be the chief and great End of our Ministry, and by the whole of our Conversation in the World, let us endeavour to honour him and advance his Interest.

Use 8. Are the Ministers of the Gospel *Embassadors for Christ*, and *sent from him*? then let the *People receive them as such*, and *bear them gladly*, willingly, reverently, and obediently. — "As it is written, how beautiful are the Feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad Tidings of good Things?" We, who are *Embassadors for Christ*, come to you our People with the most joyful News, with "glad Tidings of great Joy:" we come in the Name of the Lord, both your Lord and ours; and we come with Orders from him, to tell you that *Peace* is purchased for Sinners, that "God is in Christ reconciling the World unto himself," that he is reconcilable to you in and through Christ Jesus: And will you not gladly hear and receive such blessed News? Nay, we are sent to tell you, that God will be actually reconciled to you, if you will cordially, freely, and fully submit to the Gospel-Terms of Reconciliation: and will you not be obedient? will you not now submit? Surely this is both your Duty, and your Interest, and therefore your Wisdom.

But it's Time I should draw to a Close ; which shall be in several distinct, but brief Addressees. (1.) To my Fathers and Brethren in the *Ministry*. (2.) To those of the *Congregation* who are as yet *unreconciled to God*. And (3.) To those who are already *reconciled* to him.

I am then,

1. To address my Fathers and Brethren in the *Ministry*.
—Rev. Sirs, we have this Day been reminded *whose* *Embassadors* we are, what that great Work is which is assigned us as *Embassadors for Christ*, and some of the weighty Reasons why we should be serious, earnest, diligent, and faithful, in the Performance of it. Does it not therefore greatly concern us solemnly to reflect and examine, as to our past Conduct, and the Doctrines we have taught our People ; that we may know whether we have behav'd worthy the Character of *Christ's Embassadors*, and faithfully delivered *his Message* as sent by us to his People ? And wherein we have failed, either in point of Life or Doctrine, ought we not this Day to be humbling ourselves before the Lord, and looking unto Jesus for cleansing in his Blood, and for Grace to reform and do better for the Time to come ? — Let us seriously, diligently, and prayerfully search and study the sacred Scriptures, that we may clearly and fully know and understand the Message which our Lord would have us deliver to his People. Let us earnestly seek the special Teachings and Illuminations of the divine Spirit, that the sacred Scriptures may be clearly opened to our Understandings, and that our Understandings may be opened rightly to understand the Scriptures ; — that we may know how to preach the *Law*, and how to preach the *Gospel* ; that we may preach both Law and Gospel clearly and distinctly, powerfully and successfully to our People. — Let our humble and intire Dependance, for all needed Furniture and Assistance to our Work, be always upon him who has put us into the Ministry, and assigned us our Work ; that we

we may be enabled “rightly to divide the Word of Truth,” and to “give to every one his Portion in due Season :” to the Sinner, what belongs to the Sinner ; and to the Saint, what belongs to the Saint. Most certainly we have a particular Message to deliver distinctly to the Sinner, and to the Saint : we should be deeply concerned that none be “neglected in our Ministrations ;” neither the Sinner, nor the Saint ; neither the Babes, nor the young Men, nor the Fathers or old Men, in Christ Jesus. — In fine, we should see to it, that our whole Preaching tend to reconcile Sinners to God in Christ Jesus, and to build up Saints in Holiness and Comfort through Faith unto Salvation.

And now, among other Considerations, that we may be powerfully excited to a serious, diligent, faithful Discharge of our Duty, not only as Professors of Christianity, but as Preachers of it, as *Embassadors for the Lord Jesus Christ*, let us often think on the *great and awful Day*, when we must give up our *Account* to him whose Embassadors we are, whether we have behaved *well* or *ill* in our Office, and must receive accordingly. — On the one Hand, let us think how *dreadful* our Account will be, if through our habitual Slothfulness, Negligence, and Unfaithfulness, those under our Care and Charge perish and sink into Hell. — Let us also consider on the other Hand, how *joyful* our Account will be, if we have been faithful to our great Lord and Master, and many by our Ministry have been reconciled to God in Christ Jesus : *then shall we shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.* ||

2. I shall now address those of my *Hearers*, who as yet were *never reconciled* to God. — The Time I now have to speak to you is short ; and therefore I cannot be so particular and large in my Address, as I should be glad to be : — But “suffer the Exhortation in a few Words.” Permit us, who are *Christ’s Embassadors*, once more to

by you (as though God did beseech you by us, to pray you) *Christ's* *stead*, to be reconciled to God. — Dear immortal souls, did you ever seriously consider the sad and miserable state, that you are now in? If you had a clear Sight and Sense of it, I'm sure, you could not be easy in it. And how can you in short, more fully represent it to you, than to tell you, that *God is your Adversary*, and that *you are Enemies to your Minds to God?* Though you may have made an high Profession of Religion; though you may have been very observant of the external Part of Duty, honest in your Dealings, and outwardly much reformed; though you may have had great Awakenings, and much of the common Illuminations of the Spirit, and been fill'd with much legal Terror and Distress, which may have been succeeded by much Hope and Ease of Mind; yet, not being "renewed in the Spirit of your Minds" by the sanctifying Influences of the Holy Ghost, not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your Heart, and still remaining unrepentant, you are indeed still Enemies to God, and "have no Part nor Lot in this Matter," no actual Interest in the Peace and Reconciliation purchased by the Blood of Christ. Oh! how can you live easy and contented, *one Day* or *your* longer, in such a miserable and dangerous Condition!

If you ask, *What you must do*, that you may obtain Peace and Reconciliation with God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ? My Answer at present must be but in a word or two. — You must be diligent and serious in the use of all the appointed *Means* of Grace. You must pray, you must consider and meditate, and you must search the Scriptures, and diligently hear the Word Preach'd: you must be found diligently waiting on the Lord in his way. — But when you have done all these Things, think that now all is well with you, that now you are reconciled to God, and that God is become reconciled to you: all these Things may be done, and yet while you have an evil Heart of Unbelief in you," God is as much your Enemy, and you as much Enemies to God in your Mind,

Mind, as ever. Think not, that *because* you do the Things, God will accept you in Christ. No, you must first be in Christ by *Faith*, you must believe in him with all your Heart, you must receive and embrace him as offered to Sinners in the Gospel, before you can have a *Part in Christ*, any Right or Title to that Reconciliation and Peace with God, which Christ Jesus has purchased. In a Word, if ever you obtain Peace and Reconciliation with God, it must be by sovereign, free, rich Grace Christ Jesus.

If you ask, then, *To what Purpose* you must use the forementioned Means of Grace? I answer, you must see this, that you may be brought to see your sad and miserable State by Nature, your Need of Christ and his Benefits, the Necessity of Regeneration, Union to Christ, Faith in his Blood, &c. or, in a Word, that you may be brought to see the *Necessity* of your being *reconciled to God* by Christ Jesus, and that you may so be brought on cordially to submit to the Gospel-Terms of Peace and Reconciliation.

'Tis true, the Lord has not *tied himself* up to the Use of Means; yet ordinarily he saves in the Use of them. Hence we read of his "begetting us by the Word," *1. 18.* and of "Faith's coming by hearing," *Rom. 10. 17.* But though the Lord ordinarily saves in the Use of Means; yet 'tis not *because they are used*, but only for *Name's sake*, and for the *Glory of his Grace* in Christ Jesus. "Not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done, but according to his Mercy he saved us — through Jesus Christ our Saviour." †

Therefore, Sinners, as you would be at Peace with God, see to it that being "renewed in the Spirit of your Ministry," you "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, with all your Heart;" || see to it that you cordially, freely, and fully submit to the Gospel-Method of Grace, or "the Way of Peace" and Reconciliation with God. And I beseech you, give yourselves no Rest, till you know that

† *Tit. iii. 5.* || *Eph. iv. 23. Acts 16. 31. and 8. 37. Rom. 10.*

upon good Terms with God in Christ Jesus. — Now
the last Place,

3. One Word to those who are *already reconciled* to
God in Christ Jesus. Be sensible of the exceeding Riches
of the Grace of God in his Kindness to you by Jesus
Christ. O what admirable Mercy, what rich Grace is
this, which God hath bestowed upon you ! That he should
make such Enemies, such Rebels, as you were, into his
Favour ! That he should make you willing to be recon-
ciled to him ! and that he should become actually re-
conciled to you ! Well may you be amaz'd and astonish'd
at the Riches of divine Mercy to you ! O, be humble ;
be thankful ; and “ be sober, be vigilant, walk circum-
spectly.” Take heed of making new Breaches. “ Keep
yourselves in the Love of God ; — “ Keep yourselves
pure ; — “ Abstain from the Appearance of Evil ; —
Cleave to the Lord with Purpose of Heart ; — “ Live
in the Faith of the Son of God. — “ Henceforth live
not to yourselves, but to him who died for you and
again, and ever liveth to make Intercession. — Unto
him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all Glory
now and evermore. A M E N.

F I N I S.



CHRIST'S EMBELLISHMENT

Upon good Terms with God in Christ Jesus. — No
the last Verse.
O Word to those who are about to be
in Christ Jesus. Be sensible of the exceeding riches
the Grace of God in his Kingdom to you by Jesus
Christ. O what admirable Mercy, what rich Mercy,
which God hath bestowed upon you! That he should
send his Son, such a Son, as you were, into the
world, that he should make you willing to be reconciled
to him! and that he should become obedient to
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spectly. Take heed of making new Brethren. "Keep
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to yourselves, but to him who died for you and
was raised again, and ever lives to our Intercession. — Unto
God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all Glory
and evermore. AMEN.

20. IV. 63

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